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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: MOPS PINR KPKO ASEC SU CD

SUBJECT: POLITICAL PLURALISM IS THE REAL END GOAL OF THE APRIL ELECTIONS, AEC CHAIR TELLS SE GRATION

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Whitehead, Charge d'Affaires, State, U.S.
Embassy Khartoum; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Sir Derek Plumbly, the chairman of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), told U.S. Special Envoy (SE) to Sudan General Scott Gration that political developments in Sudan have been gathering speed over the past several months, leading to a "frenzy of interest" on the ground level in Sudan's political process. The UN needs to comprehensively plan for post-2011, a step the south would welcome but may ruffle political feathers in the north. Although it would be naive to hope that a "New Sudan" would emerge following the April elections, Plumbly said his hope is that greater political pluralism would emerge in both north and south. End summary.

¶2. (C) As the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) reaches its completion next year, Plumbly said that he had noted a "gathering in speed" of Sudan's political impetus. The high degree of interest in the upcoming April elections has initiated a national discussion of issues related to the CPA, which in turn has led to a "frenzy of interest in what's next." Plumbly said he believed that neither north nor south would regret the loss of unity if the process would preserve the interests of both sides, especially on issues of citizenship, oil revenues and security arrangements. Plumbly highlighted the need for Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states to get a "fair deal" over the next several years, in order to prevent their return to war as the rest of the bifurcated nation moves toward peace. Plumbly asserted that both the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) see the elections as a two-party exercise, and neither has conclusively thought out how to regroup should an alternate scenario arise.

¶3. (C) Following the 2011 referendum for the independence of Southern Sudan, Plumbly believes the United Nations will be in the best position to develop a strategic and logistic framework for the development of the nascent nation. "The UN needs to start planning for 2011 on their own," he said. "The Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) wants this, but because of sensitivities to the north, they can't be too public about it." Key to any plan for the south's future will be the stance of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), which would need to take a lead role in assessing the security needs in a region riven with arms, tribes, and scores yet to be settled. The international community, in turn, needs to collectively monitor and push for resolution on the issues that spread across any potential new international border, including those issues of citizenship, oil revenues, border demarcation and security arrangements. Plumbly warned that

emerging priorities in need of international support would carry a steep price tag, one which the international donor community would have to pay.

¶4. (C) Although Plumby remains unconvinced that a "New Sudan" will emerge following the April elections, he was optimistic that the elections will mark a turning point of some sort. "I hope to see greater political pluralism as an end result," Plumby said. "They can demonstrate that this is a real election, a step in the right direction for democracy." Sudan's neighbors, in turn, play a constructive role in encouraging "neighborliness" in supporting the resolution of key issues over the next several years. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki, in his role as the head of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan, can play a role in addressing the sour relations among political parties in the south. Plumby said he saw a need for the heads of the two UN peacekeeping missions in Sudan, Haile Menkerios and Ibrahim Gambari, to work together as soon as possible, given the limited amount of time before next year's referendum. Plumby invited SE Gration to the first post-election high-level meeting of the AEC, to be held the first or second week of May.

¶5. (C) Comment: Seasoned observers in Sudan often blur the line between realism and cynicism, but Plumby's hope for greater political pluralism is a practical goal that both the NCP and SPLM should support. Because both parties see politics as a zero-sum

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game, however, it will take a delicate political choreography to convince them that the elections are progress towards democracy, not merely a validation of their supremacy. End comment.

¶6. (U) This cable has been cleared by the Office of the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan.

WHITEHEAD